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**The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Public Health
William A. Hinton State Laboratory Institute
305 South Street, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130**

**Bureau of Communicable Disease Control
(617) 983-6550**

To: Massachusetts Health Care Providers
From: Susan M. Lett, MD, MPH, Medical Director, Immunization Program
Date: November 2008
Re: **Reduced Availability of State-Supplied Rotavirus Vaccine for Children**

As part of the Commonwealth's response to the state's economic situation, the state vaccine account was reduced by \$6 million in October 2008. The impact of this cut was attenuated this year due to changes that occurred in our vaccine distribution system. In July 2008, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) transitioned from a state and local vaccine distribution system to become part of a highly centralized national system.

MDPH has done everything possible to utilize inventory savings accrued from this system change, along with very careful monitoring of vaccine usage, to make every remaining dollar stretch as far as possible. Although state-supplied vaccines for adults needed to be greatly reduced, we were able to use some of the savings to continue to provide vaccines for uninsured adults in the highest risk groups and settings (e.g., local health departments; homeless shelters; community health centers; STD clinics; correctional facilities; integrated counseling, testing and referral sites; and public hospitals). State-supplied vaccines for children were essentially unchanged.

However, we are anticipating at least a \$6 million reduction in state funding for vaccines in the next state fiscal year (July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2010). As a result, unfortunately, MDPH is now forced to make further reductions in the vaccines available from our program. We have tried to minimize the impact of this decision by limiting it to the one vaccine that was most recently added to the 'universally-provided' group – rotavirus vaccine.

Restriction in the Availability of Rotavirus Vaccine for Infants
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Beginning July 1, 2009, MDPH will no longer be universally supplying rotavirus vaccine for children in our state.Providers will need to purchase rotavirus vaccine for those children who are insured.MDPH will continue to supply rotavirus vaccine for children eligible for the federal Vaccines for Children (VFC) entitlement program*.MDPH will provide a small amount of state-supplied rotavirus vaccine for those children who are not VFC-eligible, including those who are underinsured (have insurance that does not cover vaccines) and are being seen at a site that is not a federally qualified community health center.

* To be eligible for the VFC program, a child must be younger than 19 years of age and meet one of the following criteria: be enrolled in Medicaid; be without health insurance; be an American Indian or Alaska Native; or be underinsured and receive care at a federally qualified community health centers.

(over)

The Department has notified health plans and insurers in Massachusetts about this restricted availability and asked them to **reimburse** providers for rotavirus vaccine, as well as all vaccines recommended for children and adults by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), at the amount paid by the practice, as well as the administration fee. Commissioner Auerbach and senior staff at MDPH have also met with third party payors to ask their assistance in assuring reimbursement at this most difficult time.

RotaTeq® can be ordered from Merck (800-672-6372) or at their website (<https://www.merckvaccines.com/>). The Current Procedural Terminology (CPT®) code for RotaTeq® is 90680.

Rotarix® can be ordered from GlaxoSmithKline (866-475-8222) or at their website (www.gsk.com/products/vaccines). The CPT® code for Rotarix® is 90681.

Providers are encouraged to contact insurers regarding reimbursement for rotavirus vaccine. MDPH will work with the Pediatric Council of the Massachusetts Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (MCAAP) to ensure reimbursement issues are adequately discussed and resolved. The results of the MCAAP's most recent survey regarding rotavirus vaccine reimbursement and other helpful information about billing can be found on their website <http://www.mcaap.org>.

Please note, there are now **two** vaccines which will be available *only* for VFC-eligible children (and are not universally provided by the MDPH immunization program):

- human papilloma virus (HPV) vaccine; and
- rotavirus vaccine (beginning July 1, 2009)

Enclosed you will find a revised version of MDPH's *Childhood Vaccine Availability Table* which provides more guidance on state-supplied vaccines.

We recognize the challenges this decision presents for you and your patients. We appreciate your commitment to your patients and will continue to work with you to mitigate the impact of the current economic situation. If you have any questions regarding vaccine availability, please contact the MDPH Vaccine Management Unit at 617-983-6828.